

Status Distinctions and Family Organization / 59

Independence, self-reliance, and a strong sense of privacy are among the cherished values of Tepotecan family life. Relations with the extended family are limited; there is a reticence in borrowing and calling upon others for help and, by the same token, reticence in giving help. Yet, in times of emergency a Tepotecan turns most often to relatives, uncles, aunts, brothers, sisters, godparents, and *compadres*. Favors are carefully remembered and usually returned. There are no formal councils of the extended family, but relatives are generally well informed about one another and there is much gossip and unsolicited advice. Visiting among relatives is infrequent and for the most part is limited to special occasions, such as the annual barrio fiesta, illness, births, weddings, and deaths. [594] 594 602

THE FAMILY AND THE HOUSE SITE

There are 662 occupied house sites in the village. Most sites contain a single house but some have two, three, and four. The number of persons per house site ranges from 1 (45 cases) to 17 (1 case). The distribution of persons per house site is shown in Table 10. 592

TABLE 10. Distribution of Persons per House Site.

No. of Persons	No. of House Sites
1	45
2	82
3	76
4	76
5	68
6	80
7	78
8	60
9	55
10	20
11	10
12	7
13	2
14	1
15	1
16	0
17	1

Total 662

Smaller households predominate over larger ones, reflecting the fact that most households consist of the biological family. The large number of house sites occupied by a single individual is very striking for this peasant community. It reflects the weakness of the extended family and reminds us of conditions in the urban centers. [589]

An analysis of the kinship composition of each of the house sites is shown in Table 11.

It can be seen from Table 11 that over seventy per cent of all house sites are occupied by the biological family. When a niece or nephew lives with the family, it is almost always because the child was orphaned or abandoned. Such a child [736]

60 / LIFE IN A MEXICAN VILLAGE: *Tepoztlán Restudied*

592

TABLE 11. Kinship Composition by Households, 1943.

Type of Composition	House Sites
I Simple biological family with variations	
a) Husband, wife, and unmarried children	421
b) Type I-a and niece or nephew	12
c) Type I-a and brother or sister of one of the spouses	24
Total	457
II The biological family with married children	
a) Husband, wife, unmarried children, and one married son and his family	56
b) Husband, wife, unmarried children, and one married daughter and her family	26
c) Husband, wife, unmarried children, and married sons or daughters and their families	8
Total	90
III Married siblings with their families	
a) Two married brothers and their families	3
b) Two married sisters and their families	5
c) Married brother and sister and their families	6
Total	14
IV Unrelated families	5
V Persons living alone	45
VI Miscellaneous composition	51
Total	662

[736] may be taken in by the godparents, but living with an aunt or uncle is generally preferred. Usually an unwed or widowed brother or sister lives with a married sibling when the parents are no longer alive.

Approximately sixteen per cent of the house sites are occupied by multiple families, some of which are extended families. When a young married son lives with his parents as an *hijo de familia*, he continues to work for his father and is subject to his authority. In such cases there is a single fireplace with the daughter-in-law working under the supervision of the mother-in-law. This is clearly the older pattern of

[596]

Status Distinctions and Family Organization / 61

family life. Traditionally, the married son continues to live with his father until the next son marries, after which the older son may set up his own house or at least establish his own kitchen. However, the present tendency in the village is for the young couple to become independent as soon as possible, often after one or two years. In fact, many of the younger generation would prefer to set up their own house immediately after marriage and those who have the wherewithal do so. The majority of the cases under Type II and all in Types III and IV are multiple families each with their separate kitchens and separate budgets.

Although residence is preferably patrilocal, there are twenty-six cases of married daughters living with the parents. About one-third of these cases include the daughters' husbands, the others are either widows, abandoned wives, or women who have separated from their husbands. There are only eight families in which more than one married son and daughter continue to live with their parents, again indicating the few cases of large extended families living together. Cases of married siblings living with their families are also few.

Because of the absence of the custom of renting houses, it is unusual to find unrelated families living on the same house site. The five cases indicated in Table II were those in which an unused house on a house site was loaned to a family or a newly wed couple without a home.

Under "Miscellaneous Composition" we have included those cases which did not fall under our classifications. A variety of types are covered by this category. For example, cases of an old widowed brother and sister; a widow and son plus the family of her deceased husband's nephew; parents with the first and second wives of their dead son and his children, with a widowed daughter, and with a daughter separated from her husband.

THE FAMILY AS AN ECONOMIC UNIT

In Tepoztlán, as in most peasant societies, the family is the basic cooperative unit of production, and each member is expected to contribute to its support and welfare. The biological family seeks to be independent and self-sufficient. There are no institutionalized day-to-day cooperative endeavors between families, and normally little aid is given or received. Nevertheless, some mutual assistance between families exists in the form of borrowing and labor exchange. For example, a man who owns a small parcel of land but no plow-oxen may arrange to work as a *peón* for an uncle, brother, *compadre*, or neighbor, in exchange for the plowing of his own land. But there is a minimum of such cooperation, for Tepoztecos are essentially individualists.

Most work, whether it be agriculture, trade, or some special occupation, is carried on individually rather than cooperatively. Even within the family the division of labor is such that each individual does a separate task instead of working together on the same task. For example, the mother may do all the marketing, one daughter may wash all the clothes, another daughter may grind all the corn. Although such a division of labor may seem quite natural, it contrasts with that